JUMP INTO JAZZ

FOURTH EDITION

THE BASICS AND BEYOND FOR THE JAZZ DANCE STUDENT

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CHAPTER 12

JAZZ DANCE: A HISTORY

The evolution of jazz dance is as exciting as the dance form itself. American choreographer Agnes de Mille described the vital spirit of jazz dance as "the true American pep, creativity, and fun." The bond between jazz dance and the United States is more than spiritual, however: Jazz dance mirrors the social history of the American people, reflecting ethnic influences, historical events, and cultural changes. Jazz dance has been greatly influenced by social dance and popular music—especially jazz music. The two jazz forms evolved together, each echoing and affecting developments in the other.

The varieties of jazz dance reflect the diversity of American culture. But, like so much that is "from America," the history of jazz dance begins somewhere else.

THE BEGINNING

The origins of jazz music and jazz dance are found in the rhythms and movements brought to America by African slaves. African slaves were first brought to Latin America as early as 1510. As the slave trade expanded, Africans, particularly from the Niger region, were shipped to islands such as Haiti before their final destination in North America.

In Africa, every event of any consequence was celebrated and expressed in music and dance. The style of African dance is earthy: low, knees bent, pulsating body movements emphasized by body isolations and hand clapping. As arriving slaves, Africans from many cultures were cut off from more than their artistic conventions; they were isolated from their families, their languages, and their tribal traditions.

Although slave owners did not allow African crafts and ceremonies, music and dance often were permitted. After several slave uprisings, however, slave owners passed a law, the Slave Act of 1740, prohibiting slaves from playing African drums or performing African dances. However, the prohibition of their native music and dance did not suppress the slaves' desire to cling to those parts of their cultural identity. The rhythms and movements of African dance endured in foot stamping and tapping, hand clapping, and rhythmic voice sounds.

European music and dances gradually were introduced to the African slaves. This was the beginning of the long fusion of West African music and dance tradition to the harmonies and musical structure of European music. As we look back in our jazz dance history to this era, similarities between the dance traditions are evident. Buck dancing is an earthy, flat-footed two step. The Shimmy incorporates the primary movements of the Shika dance from Nigeria. The Lindy-Hop and the jitterbug have steps similar to those of the Shango dance and an Ejor tribal dance. Snake Hips (early 1920s) was duplicated from the Congo in Trinidad and the Congo in Africa. The Charleston uses movements from one of the first recorded animal dances, the "Buzzard's Lope."

As American vernacular dance evolved, it was influenced strongly by African elements of dance, movement, and musicality.

The Joffrey Ballet's interpretation of the cakewalk. Photo by Martha Swope.

MINSTREL SHOWS

In the nineteenth century, American whites discovered they enjoyed the music and dance that the slaves had created. In minstrel shows, white entertainers parodied their conception of slaves' lives and popularized the African style of dance and music, which depended greatly on solo performance and improvisation.

After the enactment of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1859, many blacks migrated north, where they replaced black-faced white minstrel performers. For the most part, though, the minstrel show was a southern entertainment—until it incorporated the cakewalk. Originally, the cakewalk was a social dance invented by blacks. Couples paraded in a circle, creating intricate steps in competition for the prize of a cake—hence the name *cakewalk*. Minstrel shows began to incorporate a theatrical form of the cakewalk as the grand finale, and many of the shows were a success nationwide. The sense of competition was retained by couples marching elegantly around in a circle, showing off with high kicks and fancy, inventive struts.

With the popularity of minstrel shows and the development of vaudeville, white performers, still in imitation of black dancers, introduced the buck-and wing. This dance was strongly influenced by the Irish jig and the English clog, with their fast legwork and footwork and minimal body and arm movement. The buck and wing was unusual: The dancer's movements stressed the musical offbeat, or upbeat. This metrical pattern was typical of African music, which is often counted one-two rather than the traditional European way, one-two. The popularity of the buck-and-wing encouraged musicians to create new accompaniments that employed the unusual rhythm, which is known as *syncopation*. The syncopated music that resulted came to be known as jazz, and syncopation was—and still is—its hallmark. As the music evolved, so did the dance. Dancers adapted the movements of the buck and wing and incorporated them to create the elegant and graceful soft-shoe.

With white dancers as the star performers of the minstrel and vaudeville shows, it was difficult for a black dancer to gain stature as part of a troupe. Embittered, many black performers migrated to Europe, where they introduced the newly evolving forms of jazz music and jazz dance.

In Europe, these talented and innovative performers were received more readily than in their American homeland. The minstrel show eventually evolved and was absorbed into the twentieth-century musical comedy.

THE 1910S

At the close of the minstrel period, the syncopated rhythms of American ragtime bands accompanied the introduction of early forms of jazz dances. In the brief period from 1910 through 1915, over a hundred new dances emerged and disappeared from American ballrooms. The fast-paced, hectic, one-step dances paved the way for the famous dance team of Vernon and Irene Castle. The Castles brought an elegance to the dances of the period with the refined Castle walk and made dancing a fad in high-society circles. They also popularized a new dance step, the fox-trot. Inspired by the rhythmic style of the blues, the fox-trot outlasted all the other dances of the period. When World War I started, the public was engaged in the novelty of dancing in restaurants and cabarets, which gave a great impetus to the musical craze called jazz.

By 1914, record players had become popular with the American public. New songs included brass band instruments such as the saxophone, the clarinet, and the trombone. These instruments symbolized the "Jazz Age." Recordings such as the Ball and the Jack, Snake Hips, and the Big Apple were heard over the wireless and encouraged the American public to dance.

THE 1920S

The 1920s marked the end of World War I, and Americans looked forward to a period of prosperity. The dances that emerged during this period reflected the public's need for gaiety and freedom, which were lacking during the war era. Through the end of the 1920s, Dixieland jazz music, with its fast ragtime beat, spread from New Orleans to Chicago and New York. The growth of jazz dance was directly influenced by this musical genre.

For a brief time, exclusively black casts danced to jazz music on the Broadway stage in such musicals as *Shuffle Along* (1921) and *Runnin' Wild* (1923). *Shuffle Along* introduced the dynamic dancer and performer Josephine Baker. Baker was in the chorus line but immediately called attention to herself with mugging and out-of-step movements that were done with such finesse that they became a featured part of the act.

The wild Charleston set the world dancing in the 1920s. Photo from Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.

Bill "Bojangles" Robinson, light on his feet and full of charisma. Photo from Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.

She continued to dance on Broadway until she went to Paris, where she became a huge success. Many other black performers also found success in Paris at this time.

Runnin' Wild introduced the Charleston, and Americans were quick to adopt it. In the Charleston, dancers used body isolations for the first time in a social dance, and the hand clapping and foot stamping that it incorporated were a direct link to the dance's African origin. The Charleston popularized dancing and prompted new dances such as the Big Apple and the Black Bottom, which were performed to dance songs that included dance-step instructions in the lyrics.

This was also the era of Bill "Bojangles" Robinson, a black tap dancer who achieved world fame through the clean and clear percussive rhythms

of his feet. The early versions of tap dance evolved from the Irish jig, which incorporated limited upper body movements. As the movements of tap dance became more flexible, the lightness of Robinson's style influenced the future of tap dance by changing the placement of the tap steps from the full foot to the ball of the foot. Bojangles was seen performing on Broadway, in Hollywood films, and in shows that toured the country. His recognition helped to establish the popularity of this dance form.

THE 1930S

The 1920s closed with the introduction of talkies, and the public flocked to the movie houses and abandoned the Broadway musical. The 1930s were the years of the Depression, when people sought an escape from their dreary lives. They found escape in dance marathons and big bands. Dance competitions became popular, for people were willing to try anything in the hope of winning a cash prize. Jazz music moved away from ragtime, Dixieland, and blues, and a new sound began to emerge with the "symphonic jazz" of Paul Whiteman. He brought full orchestration to his music and made syncopation a part of every song he played. The substitution of countermelodies for improvisation made his music more danceable.

The black American bands of Duke Ellington and Louis Armstrong also attracted public attention. Their music gave birth to swing, and a line from a song by Duke Ellington tells how quickly Americans took to it: "It don't mean a thing if it ain't got that swing." The swing era, also termed the big-band era, was marked by the orchestrated jazz music of such greats as Artie Shaw, Glenn Miller, Benny Goodman, Tommy and Jimmy Dorsey, and Count Basie. Swing music consisted of a simple theme that was improvised on by solo instruments. The dances that evolved during the swing era were an interpretation of the energy that this musical style generates. During this time, the Savoy Ballroom in Harlem, dubbed "The Home of Happy Feet," was the largest ballroom in the world—one square block—and for thirty years jazz dancers and swing musicians converged there.

Well-known dances that emerged from this era were the jitterbug and the boogie-woogie. The boogie-woogie was characterized by knee swaying and foot swinging. The jitterbug, initially introduced as the Lindy-Hop (named in honor of aviator Charles Lindbergh), was a syncopated two-step or box step. After the basic step of the Lindy, the couples separated for the breakaway, the improvisational section of the dance. During the middle and late 1930s, these improvisations became a show unto themselves. The steps and improvisations of the Lindy brought back the solo style of dancing characteristic of African dance and marked a departure from the European style of dancing in couples.

The jitterbug at a 1930s dance hall. Improvisation was the key to its excitement. Photo from Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.

The charismatic Fred Astaire, showing nonchalance and sophistication. Photo from Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.

It took years to capture the true excitement of dance on film. In 1933, two films paved the way for the following 20 years, which came to be known as the **Golden Era:** *42nd Street* with the wild cinematic choreography of Busby Berkeley and *Flying Down to Rio* with the subtle artistry of Fred Astaire, the most graceful and beguiling dancer the movies has ever known.

Busby Berkeley never studied dance or took a lesson, yet he was known for his endless ideas for dance routines. Berkeley was one of the top four dance directors on Broadway. His routines were characterized by intricate patterns created by groups of dancers. Ingenious camera movements and overhead camera projections made the patterns look as though they were a stop-frame kaleidoscope art. A string of major dance musicals fell under his direction: 42nd Street, Gold Diggers of 1933, 1935 and 1937,

and the Rooney–Garland musicals *Babes in Arms, Strike Up the Band,* and *Babes on Broadway.* Before his retirement in the early 1970s, Berkeley supervised the dance sequences of the Broadway smash *No, No, Nanette.* Berkeley's contribution to film meant the movie musical would never look the same again.

Although Astaire had been a vital part of Broadway throughout the 1920s, when musicals finally found their ground in Hollywood in 1933, he became *the* leading man for movie musicals. Astaire created a unique dance style that brought elegance to the dancer's image. He blended the flowing steps of ballet with the abruptness of jazz movements and was the first dancer to dance every musical note so that the rhythmic pattern of the music was mirrored in the dance steps.

Audiences were also intrigued by the sight of Astaire and Ginger Rogers in their complex dance duets. They were partners in a string of dance musical hits that included *Roberta* (1935), *Top Hat* (1935), *Follow the Fleet* (1936), *Swing Time* (1936), *Shall We Dance* (1937), *Carefree* (1938), and *The Story of Vernon and Irene Castle* (1939).

Over the next two decades after the split with Rogers, Astaire continued to dazzle audiences with his charismatic style of dancing with a list of stars—Leslie Caron, Cyd Charisse, Vera-Ellen, Judy Garland, and Jane Powell, to name a few. He also teamed up with male partners Bing Crosby and Gene Kelly. In 1949, when Judy Garland became ill during the making of *The Barkleys of Broadway,* MGM reunited Astaire and Rogers for their final appearance together.

In 1959, after a brief retirement, Astaire returned to dancing with a television video hour called "An Evening with Astaire," which was followed in 1960 with "Another Evening with Astaire" and in 1961 with "Astaire Time." In 1981, much of Hollywood's royalty attended the gala televised gathering in which Astaire was awarded the American Film Institute's Lifetime Achievement Award.

For the audiences who grew up watching Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers musicals, the moments of them together on film were magical. Although Rogers was criticized for having limited technique, her dancing was impeccable. She matched Astaire step for step. Rogers once said, "I did everything Fred did except backwards and in high heels." Rogers was the bridge between the uninhibited flappers of the 1920s and the well-trained dancers such as Cyd Charisse and Leslie Caron who appeared with Fred Astaire in the 1950s.

Cyd Charisse was one of the many Astaire dance partners to follow Ginger Rogers's footsteps. Charisse danced with ballet companies from the age of 14 under a variety of names. Her now-famous name was established when she did an opening dance sequence with Astaire in *Ziegfield Follies* (1946). In her early career, Charisse danced with such famous names as Gower Champion, Ricardo Montalban, and Gene Kelly in *Singin' in the Rain. The Band Wagon* gave Charisse her first starring role, dancing with Fred Astaire to the choreography of Michael Kidd. In 1954 and 1955, Charisse again danced with Kelly in *Brigadoon* and *It's Always Fair Weather.* In 1957, she danced for a final time with Astaire in *Silk Stockings.* Although her career continued with a variety of performances both live and on film, the premiere compliment of her success was from Fred Astaire: "That Cyd! When you've danced with her you stay danced with."

Dance became further integrated into musical theater in 1936 with the Broadway production *On Your Toes,* choreographed by George Balanchine. *On Your Toes* is famous for its ballet centerpiece, "Slaughter on Tenth Avenue." Ray Bolger, with a comic flair, dances himself into a state of exhaustion in an attempt to elude capture by the gangster mob.

THE 1940S

Just when social jazz dance was at its height, World War II put a stop to its popularity. Young men were enlisted to serve in battle while young women assisted the war effort in factories. Lack of attendance plus the intricate rhythmic patterns of modern jazz music, which were too complex for social dancing, led to the closing of dance halls and ballrooms. With the demise of social jazz dancing, the growth of jazz dance as a professional dance form began. During the 1940s, jazz dance was influenced by ballet and modern dance. By blending the classical technique of ballet with the natural bodily expression of modern dance, jazz dance developed a sophisticated and artistic quality. Unlike early jazz dance, which was performed by talented entertainers without formal training, modern jazz dance was performed by professionals trained in ballet and modern dance. It was at this time that jazz dance as we know it today made its claim on the Broadway stage and gained the respect of ballet and modern dance choreographers.

In 1943, *Oklahoma,* choreographed by Agnes de Mille, marked the beginning of dance as a major aspect of musical comedy. In the years that followed, other ballet choreographers became involved in Broadway musicals. Dance sequences in *On the Town* (1944) and in the ballet *Fancy Free* (1944), choreographed by Jerome Robbins, incorporated the newer, freer, and more rhythmic form of dance called jazz.

As jazz dance made its mark on the Broadway stage, its popularity in film continued. Gene Kelly began his movie career 10 years after Astaire established himself in Hollywood musicals. Although Kelly missed out on the heyday of movie musicals, he made an impact with his individual, energetic dance style that combined athletics, gymnastics, and dance.

Jerome Robbins's Fancy Free *with ballet star Fernando Bujones. Photo by Martha Swope.*

Kelly's success in the Broadway hit *Pal Joey* (1940) was his vehicle to Hollywood and his movie debut in *For Me and My Gal.* His extensive list of film credits includes *Anchors Away* (1945) in which Kelly combined live action with cartoon animation. In *Words and Music* (1948), with its amazing "Slaughter on Tenth Avenue," Kelly rechoreographed Balanchine's ballet, shortening it from 11 to 7 minutes. *On the Town* (1949) became an important film musical, as it was the first to be filmed with extended sequences on location, using the city as a set and paving the way for musicals such as *West Side Story.* Among Kelly's impressive list of films are *An American in Paris* (1951) with the famous dream ballet finale, and *Singin' in the Rain* (1952), which some connoisseurs consider the best movie musical.

Kelly's career spanned the next two decades with a combination of dancing, choreography, and directing. In *That's Entertainment, Part II,* Kelly (age 64) and Astaire (age 70) proved that they could still dance with youthful agility. Kelly also contributed to the world of dance with the television special for Omnibus, *Dancing—A Man's Game* (1958), which was devised to educate the public and remove the stigma attached to male dancers. In 1983, Kelly became an honoree of the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C.

Katherine Dunham rekindled interest in the ethnic origins of jazz dance. Photo from Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.

Dance stars became popular during the 1940s. Some stars humorously called themselves "hoofers" (those who concentrate on the feet, without making hand and body movements); others considered

themselves serious dancers. Whatever title they chose, numerous stars were popularized because of their dancing ability: Betty Grable, June Allyson, Dan Dailey, Mickey Rooney, Shirley Temple, Judy Garland, James Cagney, Rita Hayworth, and the remarkable Jack Cole.

Jack Cole, trained in modern dance, is often considered the father of jazz dance technique. With the increased demand for jazz dance in film and on the stage, it became necessary to develop a more serious and defined approach to jazz dance. Cole developed an innovative style and training technique that involved isolation of body parts, with natural body movements that flow from one action to the next. Besides his work as an innovator of jazz dance technique, Cole choreographed for films and Broadway; his most famous productions are *Kismet* (1953) and *Man of La Mancha* (1966).

Also at this time, Afro-Haitian, West Indian, and Latin dance forms fused with jazz dance, rejuvenating the primitive and earthy style of early jazz dance movements and incorporating a rhythmic drumbeat as the primary source of music. Katherine Dunham and Pearl Primus, two black dancers involved in the study of anthropology, researched these dance forms and contributed their findings to the growing vocabulary of modern jazz dance. Their work created a new respect for the ethnic beginnings of jazz dance. Dunham combined modern dance techniques with Afro-Caribbean techniques and is best noted for her performance in *Cabin in the Sky*, which she co-choreographed with George Balanchine.

THE 1950S

The decade opened with a new attitude: The public wanted musicals with serious themes. More than any other musical produced in the early 1950s, *Guys and Dolls* epitomized the new stature of American musical comedy as a form of dramatic art. Every song, dance, and line of dialogue developed the plot.

Other notable examples of the fusion of dance and drama in film are *An American in Paris* (1951) and *Singin' in the Rain* (1952), both choreographed by Gene Kelly. Michael Kidd is also among the outstanding names of those who produced motion picture choreography in which dance furthers the story line. His dance expertise is well noted in *It's Always Fair Weather* (1955) starring Gene Kelly. His film work includes such superb titles as *Where's Charley?* (1952), *The Band Wagon* (1953), *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers* (1954), *Guys and Dolls, Li'l Abner*, and *Hello, Dolly!* (1969).

Debbie Reynolds was another familiar name in movie musicals of the 1950s. Although not a trained dancer, Reynolds possessed a stage charisma that was backed by unrelenting enthusiasm. Her breakthrough in

The exciting jazz ballet from West Side Story, *choreographed by Jerome Robbins. Photo by Martha Swope.*

1950 was in *Two Weeks with Love* starring Jane Powell and Ricardo Montalban. Because of this success, Gene Kelly chose her to star with him in *Singin' in the Rain*. In 1953, she choreographed and danced in *Give a Girl a Break* with Gower Champion. Also in 1953, she starred opposite Donald O'Conner in *I Love Melvin*. Over the years, Reynolds continued her career on stage and as a top Las Vegas entertainer. Her training studio in Hollywood today is a major site for professional auditions.

As the decade continued, the influence of Latin American music and dance enriched jazz dance and music immeasurably. In 1957, Leonard Bernstein and Jerome Robbins used Latin American rhythms in *West Side Story*, a landmark in American jazz dance Broadway productions.

Matt Mattox views the body as a straight line and then sees what designs can come from it. Photo from Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.

Choreographer Robbins thrilled audiences by using jazz dance to show the brutality and bravado of warring street gangs and the exuberance of Latin culture. Robbins adapted a step from the Black Bottom to capture the style of west side ghetto kids. The new move, called the pimp walk, is unmistakable: The dancer leans forward at the waist, shoulders and knees high, and snaps his fingers.

Social dance had suffered a decline in the early 1950s. Perhaps, with the Korean War, McCarthyism, and the hydrogen bomb, Americans had little to dance about. But by 1955, youngsters were beginning to dance to a new musical style: rock and roll. Rock and roll was a re-creation by white musicians of the kind of music black musicians had been performing for 50 years. Teenagers now danced in their homes and at record hops to popular music that had a big and often monotonous offbeat.

In 1956, Elvis Presley arrived from the South as a new teen idol, and he transformed the sound of rock and roll. Presley presented a blend of hillbilly, gospel, blues, and popular music and introduced his sound to TV audiences. As the enthusiasm for rock and roll music continued, dancing increased, accelerated by Dick Clark's television program "American Bandstand." In the foreground was a group of authentically awkward young dancers with whom any teenager could identify; in the background groups sang lip-sync to their own recordings. A wave of new group dances became popular: the Madison, the Birdland, the Bop, the Locomotion, the Chicken, and the Mashed Potato. Surprisingly, however, many of these dances were throwbacks to earlier eras. The Chicken was a parody of the Lindy-Hop; the Mashed Potato was reminiscent of the Charleston.

During this period, Matt Mattox emerged as a major talent in the development of professional jazz dance. Mattox's technique involves the isolation of body parts and the view that the body, in its simplest form, is a straight line from which designs can be created. (Mattox may have developed the straight-line idea from Jack Cole's study of the linear design of East Indian dance.) The Mattox style is percussive, with strong angular movements and sharp accents, rebounds, and turns. Mattox choreographed for Broadway, television, and ballet companies.

In the late 1950s, jazz dance was theatrically presented on the concert stage by Alvin Ailey. In his choreography, which primarily reflected black experiences, Ailey used a variety of jazz dance styles. One of the classics of the Alvin Ailey Dance Theater—*Revelations*, a suite of African American spirituals—premiered in 1958.

THE 1960S

The early 1960s introduced the Twist. The Twist, characterized by Presley-like hip gyrations, partners never touching but responding to each other's movements, brought adults back to the social dance floor. The Twist became an overnight craze because it was so easy to perform.

While adults twisted with Chubby Checker, the 1960s teenagers were ready for a new movement and a new sound. Out of Detroit came a new musical revolution: Motown. Motown groups featured a chorus that performed choreographed routines while the lead singer was spotlighted in the forefront. On the dance floor teens copied the choruses by performing line dances. The most popular was the Stroll, which reemerged in later years as the Hustle.

The innovative and danceable music of the Beatles rocked American culture like an explosion. The teenage population especially was attracted to the dance floor by the immense popularity of the Beatles' music, which incorporated a variety of rhythms and interesting, relevant lyrics. Following in the wave of success of the Beatles were a flood of look-alike, sound-alike musical groups that gave social dance yet another boost.

The youth of America found another style of dance expression in the popular depictions of California. TV offered "77 Sunset Strip," and Hollywood cranked out an endless stream of beach blanket movies. The music reflected the craze with songs by the Ventures, Surfaris, Jan and

The Gus Giordano Jazz Dance Chicago troupe. Giordano's technique is influenced by the natural and free body movements of modern dance.
Photo by John Randolph.

Dean, and the Beach Boys. A whole new wave of dances emerged: the Swim, the Jerk, the Monkey, and the Hitchhiker. The explosion gave social dance yet another boost. By 1965 there were 5,000 discotheques in America. Dance studios flourished as dance enthusiasts attempted to keep abreast of dance fads that came and went from week to week.

The hippie, "flower child," years of the late 1960s brought a new style of rock music influenced by psychedelic drugs and political protest, and a revival of old dance halls—now the scene of live rock music, psychedelic light shows, and solo improvisatory dancing.

More and more television shows featured music and professional dancing. Most notable were "Shindig," "Hullabaloo," and "Laugh-In." Hosts of other TV variety shows—Dean Martin, Jackie Gleason, and Ed Sullivan—often featured a line of dancers as backup for a star performer. Television thus helped to popularize dance crazes while giving dancers a steady income. As the alternatives for a dance career increased, so did the need for formal training.

During the 1960s, two major names appeared among the ranks of professional jazz dance greats: Eugene Louis Facciuto—or Luigi, as he is called—and Gus Giordano. Both men achieved continuing fame as developers of jazz dance technique and choreography.

Luigi developed his technique as a result of an auto accident that left him paralyzed on the right side. Doctors claimed he would never walk, let alone dance again. But Luigi persisted with operations, physical therapy, and his own study of body development based on dance exercise. He attained the ability to move and dance again, and he began to teach the technique he had learned. Luigi taught a series of exercises that used the total body in each movement phase. His technique requires that the body be exercised to its fullest to develop the strength necessary for muscle control, yet still look beautiful. The Luigi technique, influenced by ballet training, is lyrical. It is best described in his own book, *Jazz with Luigi.*

Gus Giordano's style is classical, but it is greatly influenced by the natural and freer body movements of modern dance. His technique teaches isolation movements, emphasizing the head and torso and creating an up-lifted look of elegance. Yoga is incorporated into his technique as a means of relaxation. Further study of Gus Giordano can be made through his book, *Anthology of American Jazz Dance.* In the early 1970s, the Gus Giordano company, Jazz Dance Chicago, would grow to an international touring ensemble.

Although the focus of the 1960s seemed to be on the revolution of musical change and social dance innovations, jazz dance maintained a respectable position on the Broadway stage. Notable jazz dance productions of this decade were *Cabaret,* choreographed by Ron Field, and *Sweet Charity,* choreographed by Bob Fosse.

THE 1970S

In the 1970s, the public was more receptive to a broad variety of entertainment forms, as can be seen in the wide range of musical styles that appeared at this time. College students attended rock concerts, aspiring musicians played free concerts in city parks, and folk music was heard in restaurant lounges. Musical tastes ranged from acid rock to electronic music to soul and lyrical jazz. Discotheques (now called discos) gave rise to such choreographed line dances as the Bus Stop, the Roller Coaster, and the Hustle. The Bump, another popular dance, encouraged bodily contact as partners bumped one another with various parts of their anatomies.

A notable jazz dance production of the 1970s was *Grease,* a nostalgic re-creation of teenage life in the 1950s, featuring the era's enthusiastic dances to high-energy rock and roll tunes. At the theater, the public fell in love with Michael Bennett's *A Chorus Line* (1975). Dance as the primary theme of a production was now able to capture the attention of a Broadway crowd.

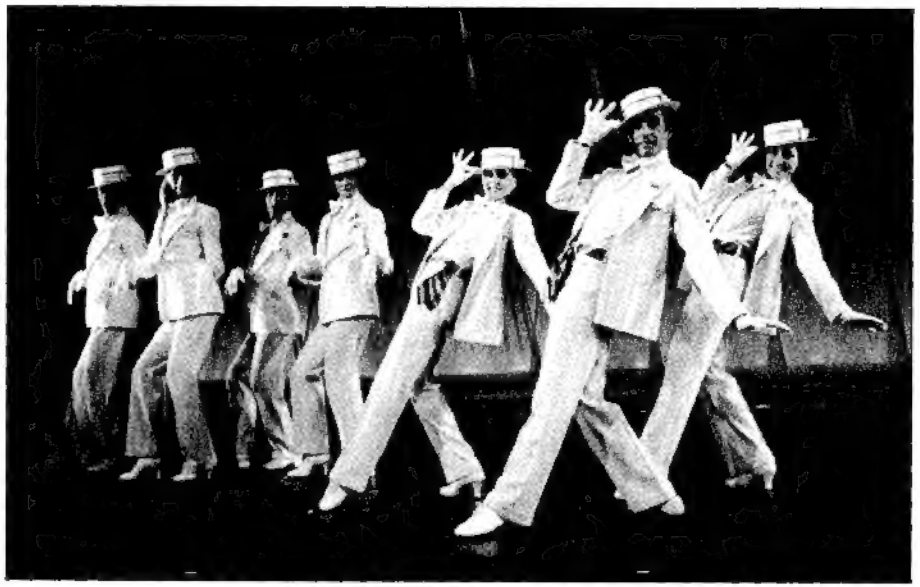
John Travolta made the decade's biggest impact on dancing in the movie *Saturday Night Fever* (1977), which became a box office smash. With his lead role in *Saturday Night Fever* came instant stardom. To prepare for his role, Travolta visited many New York discos. He also ran two hours a day and danced three hours a day to get in shape for the dancing. In the 1980s movie sequel, *Stayin' Alive*, Travolta appeared again as a male dancer, this time auditioning and performing in a Broadway production in the movie's storyline. Charismatic, sexy, and very physical in his dance movements, Travolta boosted the image of male dancers.

In the 1970s, Bob Fosse became the outstanding name in jazz dance. Although he worked as a performer on Broadway and in films, Fosse's true success was as a choreographer, beginning with his first choreography, *Pajama Game*, in 1954, and followed by *Damn Yankees* (1955), *Bells Are Ringing* (1956), *New Girl in Town* (1957), *Redhead* (1959), *Little Me* (1962), *Sweet Charity* (1967), and *Chicago* (1975). In 1973, Fosse was the first director in history to win three national entertainment awards: the Oscar for his film version of *Cabaret*, the Tony for the Broadway musical *Pippin*, and the Emmy for the television special "Liza with a Z." In 1978, Fosse received a second Tony award for his Broadway success *Dancin'*. Drawing on his varied talents, Fosse also directed, coauthored, and choreographed the widely acclaimed and Oscar-nominated film *All That Jazz* (1979).

Fosse's style was distinct. It was highly creative and often included bizarre movements. His choreography was slick, erotic, and intense. There were many poses characteristic of the Fosse style; most recognizable was the long-legged look with raised arm and limp wrist. Fosse and his highly personalized jazz dance style continued to make a mark on the Broadway stage and in Hollywood films throughout the 1980s. Fosse was a one-man jazz phenomenon.

Another important 1970s influence on jazz dance was developing on both U.S. coasts. Out of the ghetto neighborhoods of Los Angeles and New York City came a new dance phenomenon called **breakdance.** *Breakdance* is a generic term for all forms of urban street dance and includes breaking, locking, and electric boogie or popping.

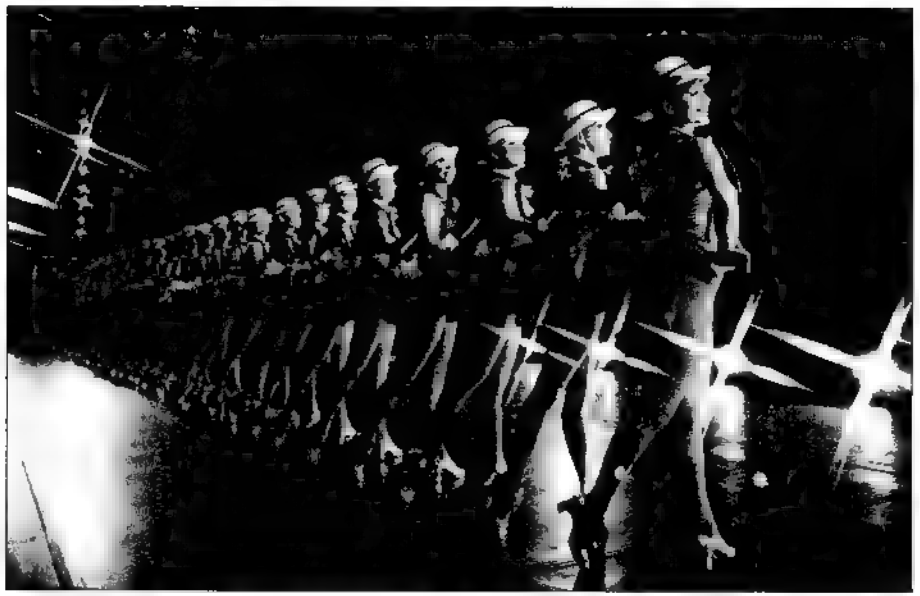
In the 1960s, TV shows like "Lost in Space" inspired African American youth in Los Angeles to invent the Robot using movements that were perfect, sharp, and in control. In 1969, Don Campbell, well known among street dancers in Los Angeles, invented a dance called the **Campbellock,** mixing robotic movements with wild, out-of-control moves plus stop-and-start movements, all spiced with comic facial expressions. The Campbellock started a new dance movement called **locking.** In the early 1970s, Campbell put together a dance group named the Lockers. The Lockers were discovered by Toni Basil, a TV choreographer famous for shows like "Shindig" and "Hullaballoo," who joined the Lockers and, by developing their dance act, brought them to international fame.



Bob Fosse's Tony award–winning show Dancin'. *Fosse's dances are slick and entertaining. Photo by Martha Swope.*

At the same time, B-boying, popularly known as breaking, was developing on the East Coast in the Bronx, New York. The term *B-boys* means break boys because the dancers dance to the break part of the music. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, B-boy dancing began with a dance called the Good Foot, performed to a James Brown record of the same name. The Good Foot was the start of breakdance, incorporating moves involving drops and spins. Footwork came into B-boying when dancers started using their arms to support their bodies as they performed gymnastic moves, shuffles, and sweeps on the floor.

Around 1977, breaking was losing its popularity with African Americans. A new generation of Latino B-boys emerged, taking breaking to a new level with more difficult acrobatic and gymnastic moves. During this time, popular Kung Fu films introduced a variety of martial arts moves that were incorporated in breaking. In the 1980s, B-boying became more popular and breakdance was introduced to the world by the movie *Flashdance* in 1983.



Radio City Rockettes take a basic jazz position in their chorus line pose
Photo by Martha Swope

When breaking was developing in New York, yet another new style of street dance was developing in Fresno, California. Pistol Pete, who was involved with the Lockers, and his brothers invented a new dance called the Electric Boogaloo (popping), which combined locking, the Robot, and slow and controlled mime movements. When the Electric Boogaloo became popular in Los Angeles, it was introduced on "Soul Train" and challenged the popularity of locking.

Each of these forms of urban street dance, rising out of the creativity of poor inner-city kids, became a way to determine superiority. The dances were competitive in nature, and dancers battled each other to determine who was best. Dance skill was a means of attaining superiority in street-corner fraternities; it was an alternative to gang warfare. In the 1980s, urban street dance exploded out of the ghettos and into mainstream American dance culture.

As jazz expanded in the entertainment field, so did the need for training centers for potential dance professionals. The Dance Theater of Harlem, founded by Arthur Mitchell, made its official debut in 1971. Although a ballet company, the company is dedicated to the performance of choreography that reflects classical, jazz, and traditional African themes. For many years, the company's signature piece was Geoffrey Holder's *Dougla* (1974). In 1975, the Broadway hit *The Wiz* earned Holder two Tony awards. *The Wiz* was later performed as a film, starring Diana Ross and Michael Jackson.

In the late 1970s, Hubbard Street Dance Chicago (HSDC) was founded by dancer/choreographer Lou Conte. The company developed a distinct repertoire in contemporary dance that combined theatrical jazz, modern, and classical ballet techniques. From the beginning, HSDC was recognized not only locally but also nationally and internationally. It entertained audiences each season in downtown Chicago, toured extensively, and performed in public television specials.

Jazz dance further expanded its horizons when it combined with physical fitness classes to make exercise more fun and sociable. The result was a new hybrid: aerobic dance classes. The popularity of the combination of dance and aerobic exercise has created such great interest that over 20 million people now participate in this form of exercise.

THE 1980S

The most prominent name in 1980s musical theater was Andrew Lloyd Webber, who is acclaimed for shifting the focus of the Broadway musical from America to the London stage. His musical hits include *Jesus Christ Superstar, Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat, Starlight Express, Phantom of the Opera,* and the hottest musical of the 1980s, *Cats*. In *Cats,* dancers portrayed felines with distinct characters and danced with the litheness and agility of their feline counterparts. The choreography of Gillian Lynn was a primary means of characterization, and she earned several major awards for her outstanding work.

The movies of the 1980s gave jazz dance a tremendous boost. Two of the most prominent movies of the decade were *Fame* (1980) and *Flashdance* (1983). In *Fame,* high school students danced in their professional preparation classes, in their classrooms, in the cafeteria, and down the streets. There was no end to the energy and talent, not only of the students, but of the teachers as well. Debbie Allen, portraying the dance instructor, amazed the audience with her talent and innovative choreography. Hollywood noticed the popularity of this film, and soon *Fame* became a weekly television program highlighted by at least one

major dance presentation in each episode. Adolescents were inspired by the achievements of these youths and joined jazz dance classes in hope of attaining their own fame. In *Flashdance,* the characters realized their dreams of success through a story line dominated by dance performances. Other dance films that drew audiences to the movies included *Stayin' Alive* (1983), *Footloose* (1984), *Breakdancing* (1985), and *Dirty Dancing* (1987). Although these films lacked a strong story line, showy jazz dance sequences appealed to a wide audience. Dance studios and jazz dance classes were crowded with eager students interested in conquering this exciting dance form.

That's Dancin' (1986) outlines the history of dance, including a brief introduction on dance as a part of early human development. Depictions of dance appear in cave art, sculpture, and drawings. Narrator Gene Kelly traces the origins of today's modern dance to the late 1800s, when the motion picture camera was first invented. Kelly leads the audience through decades of dance on film. *That's Dancin'* is an entertaining, educational dance film that appeals to young and old alike.

American business noticed the large audience appeal of jazz dance and quickly moved to capitalize on the craze. As never before, jazz dance appeared in television commercials: Panasonic, Coca-Cola, and several major fast-food chains featured dance as a selling aspect for their products.

A new medium for dance and professional dancers in the 1980s was the music video. When MTV began broadcasting in 1981, music videos combined high-energy jazz, ballet, street dance, and social dance in striking, innovative ways. Over 130 million people see MTV clips each day, and the choreographers' names—Michael Peters, Jeffery Hornaday, Lester Wilson, Toni Basil, Paula Abdul, Madonna, Janet Jackson, and others—have become household words. One name, however, stands supreme among the video stars of the 1980s—Michael Jackson.

Michael Jackson, the youngest member of The Jackson Five from the Motown era, was singing and dancing his way to stardom. His talent for both song and dance provided a natural transition to MTV production. Jackson made a major impact on the direction of jazz dance with his creative and imaginative dance steps and choreography. His style was well marked with personalized movements and poses: his sexy sit pose and wide knock-kneed position; his fast jumping-jack foot action with a quick crossed foot turn; his famous pencil spin that revolved like a spinning top; his head, shoulder, and rib isolations and erotic and suggestive hip thrusts; the moonwalk; and his trademark toe rise. In his earlier video productions, "Don't Stop 'til You Get Enough" and "Rock with You" (both 1979), the music retained the sound of the decade's disco beat, and the format was relatively simple with a few lighting and technical effects. In the early 1980s, however, Jackson exploded on the video screen with elaborate and intricate technical productions. In 1982, he dominated the screen with "Thriller," "Beat It," and "Billie Jean." In 1987,

Michael Jackson in his music video "Billie Jean." Photo by AP/Wide World Photos.

"The Way You Make Me Feel" and "Bad" took command of both the music and video charts across the country. Jackson was not just an American success; he was an international star. His elaborate productions and distinctive trademarks, such as the single glove, set him apart as a performer. Much of Jackson's choreography was created by Michael Peters or by Peters and Jackson collaborating as a team. Jackson's impact on jazz dance—his music, his videos, his choreography, his style, and his presentation—is almost immeasurable.

In the 1980s, another name was added to the list of professional instructors who have influenced the development of jazz dance—Joe Tremaine. In the early 1960s, he arrived in the Big Apple to study ballet with Vencinzo Celli, the techniques of modern jazz and the isolation of

body parts with Matt Mattox, lyrical jazz technique from Luigi, and the fusion of jazz and modern dance from Claude Thompson. Tremaine's early experiences included "The Jackie Gleason Show," weekly television variety shows, television specials, and a European series under the direction of Nick Castle who, impressed by Tremaine's performances, asked him to work on "The Jerry Lewis Show" as the lead dancer. His performance on "The Jerry Lewis Show" was seen by Eugene Loring, choreographer of ballets such as *Billy the Kid*, who offered him a teaching position at his American School of Dance.

Tremaine is a natural teacher; his teaching style is comparable to his style on the dance floor—up to the minute, fast, flashy, and funky. The variety of techniques he brought from New York are also a part of Tremaine's unique style, which many refer to as "West Coast jazz" or "L.A. jazz." Tremaine's style, driven by current musical trends, is rhythmical and jazzy. When Gus Giordano organized the First American Jazz Dance World Congress, he invited jazz legends Luigi and Matt Mattox. The East Coast was represented by Frank Hatchett and the West Coast by Joe Tremaine. Tremaine received the American Video Conference Award for the "Best Dance Instruction Video" (1988), the "Gus Giordano Dance Award" (1990), and the "Dance Educators of America Award" (1992). He has taught, coached, or choreographed for a long list of stars including Paula Abdul, Ann-Margaret, Liza Minelli, and Debbie Reynolds. Despite the allure of Hollywood glamour and awards, Tremaine's passion remains in teaching.

At his Hollywood studio, Tremaine teaches a challenging schedule of classes from beginner to advanced. Over the years, he has developed professional dancers and choreographers.

Tremaine has channeled his enthusiasm for dance in yet another direction—his own dance conventions and competitions. Through his conventions and competitions, Tremaine brings his Hollywood style to nearly 30,000 dancers a year. The popularity of Tremaine conventions has affected the dance history of the 1990s. His dream is to expand his conventions internationally, bringing his fast, funky style of jazz to other countries.

THE 1990S AND BEYOND

The status quo in shows, films, and innovations from the late 1980s has been maintained to the current day. Andrew Lloyd Webber continues to be the key name in musical theater with the ongoing success of the shows he created in the 1980s. Very little has been done in film featuring jazz dance. Unfortunately, the dance world has lost many talented choreographers and dancers to the AIDS epidemic. As a result, the hottest tickets

Jazz dance legends (clockwise from left): Luigi, Matt Mattox, Joe Tremaine, Frank Hatchett, Gus Giordano. Photo by Mike Canale.

on Broadway are reproductions from past decades such as *Guys and Dolls, Crazy for You, Showboat, Damn Yankees,* and *Tommy.* The early 1990s was an era in which the best of Broadway past reigned.

In 1993, *Will Rogers' Follies* brought forward a new name in choreography—Tommy Tune. In 1969, the six-foot-six Tune first appeared in *Hello, Dolly!* starring Barbra Streisand, and he was prominent in *The Boy Friend* (1971). Tune soon established himself as a vital new dancer and choreographer. *Will Rogers Follies* highlights his dancing elegance and skilled choreography.

New Broadway musicals included a variety of dance genres. Tap dance was featured in both *Bring in da Noise, Bring in da Funk* and *Tap Dogs. Stomp* included a variety of scenarios where the structure and objects of the scene were used to create rhythms that inspired dance movements. The rock opera *Rent* was an update of *La Boheme,* a musical based on the famous opera and rewritten to reflect contemporary life. Choreographed

by Marlies Yearby, the dance incorporated in this rock musical stemmed from a modern background with a jazz influence. In addition to winning three 1996 Tony awards (not only Best Musical but also Best Score and Best Book), *Rent* won the 1996 Pulitzer Prize for drama, which was awarded to Jonathan Larson.

In 1997, as in the early part of the decade, Broadway looked to its past for entertainment direction. The newest reproduction of *Chicago* dazzled audiences once again. Bob Fosse had choreographed a reproduction of *Chicago* in 1975. This time, the show was choreographed by Ann Reinking and reflected the famous Fosse style.

While *Rent* was winning acclaim on the Broadway stage, 600 dancers in Canada auditioned for 34 roles in *Fosse,* the Broadway-bound musical from Drabinsky's Toronto-based Livent, Inc. The idea for *Fosse* came from Chet Walker in 1985, who as a performer and dance captain of many Fosse shows wanted to create a company to perform his mentor's work. The show, which opened in 1998, contained re-created numbers from Fosse's choreographer-director's stage, film, and television credits. Gwen Verdon, Fosse's former wife and muse, was an artistic advisor for the show, and the couple's daughter, Nicole, was a ballet mistress. The show was choreographed by Gwen Verdon and Ann Reinking. After its premiere success, the show moved to Broadway and quickly became the hottest new musical of 1999. In reality, it is a dance concert rather than a musical and is a retrospective of Fosse's famed choreography. The show includes re-creations from the stage productions *Chicago, Sweet Charity, Dancin', Damn Yankees, Pajama Game, Pippin,* and *Big Deal;* the movies *Kiss Me Kate* and *Little Prince;* and the TV shows "Liza with a Z" and the 1968 Bob Hope special. *Fosse* easily captured the Broadway 1999 Tony award, adding to the choreographer's fame even after his death.

Training for dancers is never ending. In the 1990s jazz dance world, the buzz words in training centers were *street dancing* and *hip hop.* Hip hop evolved from 1970s breakdance. Because hip hop music is always changing, however, the old breaking movements no longer fit with the new style of hip hop music. The new hip hop is also referred to as **new school dance** to differentiate it from the old style and music. New school dance started around 1986 with easy moves and steps such as the Wap, Running Man, Roger Rabbit, and Robocop. During this time, rap videos featured dancers using the new school dance form. In the 1990s, new school dance became more complex, although movements were borrowed from the electric boogie, locking, and even the 1970s Soul Train steps.

New styles evolve when dancers create their own moves by, for example, combining moves from martial arts and reggae. The new movements are bouncy, fast, and funky. Upper-body movements and isolations are incorporated to give the emphasized footwork complexity. The total freedom of the movements allows the dancer to improvise.

The new school hip hop is a style of clothing, attitude, and music. Hip hop music is an offspring of rap and has evolved through the rap music culture. Originally, hip hop music had only rapping, but now has rapping and/or singing to the beat, which makes it more versatile. New York City is the best place to see new school dancers, particularly "MECCA" at Tunnel on Sundays. New school dance is very popular in Japan, where there are many new school dance competitions.

Urban street dance and new school dance movements generally originate in either New York or Los Angeles. Although clubs are the best places to see these dance forms, MTV is the main vehicle that introduces these steps to the rest of America. Dancers need to be acutely aware of the latest steps and styles. As a result, dance training centers are filling classes with dancers who wish to master this highly energetic and popular jazz dance trend.

The current jazz dance performance world has taken a few new turns. Professional jazz dance has sought a new and wider variety of performance platforms including cabaret and lounge shows, cruise ship entertainment, and touring dance companies. Concert tours with musical superstars feature dancers as an integral part of their concert entertainment. Jazz dance, and in particular musical comedy, has become primary in theme park entertainment. Music videos still prominently use jazz dance. Major television productions such as award presentation galas continue to feature jazz dance. Industrials—promotional business shows—use jazz dance as a feature in sales promotion and display of their products.

Jazz dance has also expanded its parameters from being solely a creative and entertaining experience to becoming a competitive event. Jazz dance has embraced America's youth, and young people are responding with overwhelming enthusiasm. Dance schools are integrating dance competition as a part of students' training and development. Major dance conventions and competitions are featured across the nation with age group divisions ranging from preschool to adult. Awards are presented for dance and choreography, and studios also receive recognition. The ultimate experience for the dancer is to compete in television events that involve international competition and substantial monetary reward. Most prized in winning, however, is the possibility of being recognized by one of the Hollywood talent agencies that offer contracts to up-and-coming talent. Because of its emphasis on competition and athleticism, it's not unthinkable that jazz dance may become an Olympic event.

The history of jazz dance has evolved in pace with the music and the moods of each decade (see Table 12-1). Jazz dance gives way to rules and restrictions and allows for its art form to be versatile, spontaneous, contemporary, and exciting. It will be interesting to see what new steps jazz dance takes in the new millennium!

TABLE 12-1 JAZZ DANCE HISTORY AT A GLANCE

	PEOPLE	DANCES	SHOWS	INNOVATIONS AND EVENTS
1800s		Cakewalk	Minstrel shows	Fugitive Slave Act of 1859 Black spiritual music
1900		Eagle Rock Slow Drag Buzzard's Lope Buck-and-wing	Vaudeville	
1910	Vernon and Irene Castle	One-step dances Castle walk Fox-trot The Shuffle Snake Hips Funky Butt The Big Apple		World War I Record players
1920s	Josephine Baker Bill "Bojangles" Robinson	Charleston Black Bottom	*Shuffle Along* *Runnin' Wild*	Dixieland Jazz Talkies
1930s	Duke Ellington Louis Armstrong Busby Berkeley Fred Astaire Ginger Rogers George Balanchine	Jitterbug Boogie-woogie Lindy-Hop	*42nd Street* *Flying Down to Rio* *On Your Toes*	Big bands Savoy Ballroom The Depression Dance marathons
1940s	Agnes de Mille Jerome Robbins Gene Kelly Jack Cole Katherine Dunham		*Oklahoma* *On the Town* *Fancy Free* *Pal Joey* *Anchors Away* *Cabin in the Sky*	World War II
1950s	Michael Kidd Matt Mattox Elvis Presley Cyd Charisse Debbie Reynolds Alvin Ailey	Rock and roll Rock and roll group dances The Madison The Birdland The Bop Locomotion Mashed Potato The Chicken	*An American in Paris* *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers* *Guys and Dolls* *Singin' in the Rain* *West Side Story*	Korean War Pimp walk Rock and roll music American Bandstand Soul Train

Table continues

TABLE 12-1 JAZZ DANCE HISTORY AT A GLANCE . . . (Continued)

	PEOPLE	DANCES	SHOWS	INNOVATIONS AND EVENTS
1960s	Chubby Checker The Beatles Luigi Gus Giordano Don Campbell	The Twist Line dances The Stroll The Hustle Campbellock	*Cabaret* *Sweet Charity*	Motown TV variety shows featuring dance Discotheques Psychedelic era Hippies
1970s	Michael Bennett Bob Fosse John Travolta The Lockers	Disco dance Locking Breaking Electric Boogaloo The Good Foot	*Grease* *A Chorus Line* *Cabaret* (film) *Pippin* *All That Jazz* *Dancin'* *Saturday Night Fever* *The Wiz*	Aerobic dance Dance Theater of Harlem Hubbard Street Dance Chicago
1980s	Andrew Lloyd Webber Michael Jackson Joe Tremaine	The moonwalk The Wap Running Man Roger Rabbit Robocop	*Cats* *Fame* *Flashdance* *That's Dancin'*	MTV "Thriller" "Beat It" "Billie Jean"
1990s	Tommy Tune Ann Reinking	Hip Hop New School	*Guys and Dolls* *Crazy for You* *Tommy* *Showboat* *Damn Yankees* *Rent* *Fosse*	Dance competitions